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# ❖THE❖OLD❖TESTAMENT❖STUDENT.❖

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WITH this number THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT enters upon its sixth volume. Few journals ever began under more inauspicious circumstances. Even its best friends doubted the possibility of its establishment. The difficulties in the way of its success have at times seemed altogether insuperable; yet, one by one, they have been overcome. Those who have so kindly rendered aid are gratefully remembered; without their assistance, the effort would long ago have failed. We may, however, now look forward, with reasonable assurance, to a more certain future. THE STUDENT has made for itself a place in the periodical literature of the day, and this place it will seek with each new volume to fill more worthily.

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A LEADING characteristic of the numerous articles on the Revision has been their exceeding monotony and dullness. This holds true even of those which are to be regarded as the most valuable. Quite different in this respect from the great majority of such articles is that of Prof. Charles R. Brown in the July *Bibliotheca Sacra*, to be concluded in the October number. The writer, by an ingenious method, presents his material in a form which at once commends it to the attention of the reader. In order to perform his task exhaustively he limits himself to the Book of Genesis. He considers the text, the grammar, the lexicography and the English of the Revision, by indicating in one column the changes which the revisers have made and in a parallel column the changes which, in his opinion, they ought to have made. The article, with the material which it contains, the frankness of its criticism and the freshness of its presentation, deserves the special notice of all who are interested in Bible-translation. It furnishes a good specimen of what may be called solid work.

HOW many there are who suppose that with a slight knowledge of grammar, and a small vocabulary, one has all that is needed to do exegetical work. These even suppose that the translation of a given passage according to grammatical rules is its interpretation. Sight is lost of the fact that language, even when most carefully expressed, is ambiguous, and that to no two individuals does the same language convey the same thought. The following sentiment expressed by Dr. A. C. Kendrick in the course of his comment on a difficult passage (1 Cor. XV. 27), deserves careful consideration :

“We have thus far dealt with the facts and the logic of the matter. We have looked at the historical evidence, the nature of the usage and finally at the logical exigencies of the passage. We regard this latter evidence as decisive, both as to what the meaning of the passage is not and what it is. We have no right, indeed, to force our own meaning into an author’s train of thought, but we have a right to draw his meaning out of it. We may rightly presume that he will lead us toward the goal toward which his footsteps are regularly tending. We may surely make logical consistency an important element in interpretation. Man is something more than a mere grammar-grinder. The lexicon is not the whole of exegesis. Logic and rhetoric—the law of thought and the law of passion—are mightier than grammar, and will ever furnish the most decisive elements in the interpretation of human speech. We can never rest in our exposition until the logical demands of the passage are satisfied. However seemingly encompassed in grammatical rules, it will refuse to lie still, but will arise and haunt us with the ghost of a murdered thought. When, on the contrary, the difficulties of thought have resolved themselves, we easily dispose, especially in an energetic and impassioned writer, of some difficulties of expression. We shall find the language easily yield to the demand of the thought.”

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DOES the average minister make such use of his Bible, aside from his use of it for devotional purposes, as, in view of the character of the Book, and of the relation which it sustains to his profession, he ought to make? He goes to it every week, it is true, for a text or two; yet how comparatively seldom is it that the sermon preached grows out of the text itself. He prepares, of course, the current Sunday-school lesson, but here again the whole aim is a homiletical one. Now we grant freely that the minister must be a preacher, that in his work he must have in mind the practical application of the great truths of divine revelation. But, we believe, that minister errs most grievously both against himself, his people, and the cause of God, who studies his Bible exclusively from the homiletical stand-point, unless, perhaps, the word homiletical is to be used in a sense which it does not generally convey.

The difficulty, briefly stated, is this: Men study the Bible narrowly, not broadly; superficially, not deeply; for immediate, and not

for permanent results. The question *is*, What can I get out of this passage for my next sermon, or my next lecture? The question *ought to be*, What does this passage teach? What is its place in the great body of divine truth? Let the pastor, aside from his devotional study, his sermonizing, his preparation for the Bible-class, do a comprehensive, systematic Bible-work which looks not to immediate, but to permanent results,—a work, not, perhaps, at once practical, but which, in the end, will prove to have furnished a treasure-house of valuable material, available at any time and for all time.

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THERE is a general sentiment that a student can *finish* his education only by going abroad. In some departments of study this feeling prevails more largely than in others. It is especially prevalent in reference to linguistic and exegetical study. Is there not danger that this idea may be carried too far? Is it really true that our own country affords no adequate opportunities for advanced work in these lines? One must at once concede the many general advantages of a trip abroad. But aside from the general profit gained, how is it? Will the student find in Europe better *teachers* than in America? There are on the continent hundreds of renowned lecturers and authors; but do they *teach*? Germany is full of original investigators who are all the time bringing to light new and valuable material; but is not all this published? Foreign universities, it is true, have libraries with which even our best American libraries compare but poorly; but these libraries are for the use of men who have already become specialists, not for those who are merely beginning to prepare themselves for the work of specialists.

In the departments referred to, viz., the Semitic languages, and biblical exegesis, will not the embryonic specialist do well first to place himself in the hands of a Lyon, a Haupt, a Francis Brown, a Beecher, a Terry, or a Curtiss, and later, when he has exhausted the sources of supply in America, try a foreign university? The time has now gone by, if it ever existed, when a man *must* go abroad to study. The student can employ his time more profitably at home. Ample opportunities are offered him for work in every department. There will come a time in his life when a residence abroad will be of priceless value to him. This, however, will not be at the beginning of his work, but when, after having thoroughly grounded himself in the first stages of his subject, he is able to *stand alone*.

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THE benefits of the Hebrew Summer Schools are indirect as well as direct. The direct benefits are received by those who engage in

these schools. But many who come into no contact with these schools, are also benefited by them. First, there has come about a remarkable change in the sentiment of students in theological seminaries. It is not more than ten years since in some of the foremost seminaries of the country it was thought no discredit for a man or for a class to fail in the Hebrew examination. To-day the sentiment is different. Again, some young men have been convinced of the importance of studying the Old Testament in the original, and have determined to attain some degree of proficiency in the language before entering a theological seminary. This persuasion, so far as due to the Hebrew Summer School, has been an indirect result. A direct result is that such men are enabled to accomplish their purpose. Another result has been the testimony called forth to the importance of the study. What stronger testimony could these men, both teachers and scholars, give to the importance of a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament than this laying aside the ordinary duties of life or the ordinary vacation pursuits and giving four weeks to Old Testament study? The Christian churches have been underestimating the importance of the Old Testament. If nothing more was done than to convince the churches that the Old Testament is worthy of earnest and devout study, the Hebrew Summer Schools will not have been in vain. Fourthly, such study has been kindled in regions which have received no direct impulse from these schools. Christian pastors are looking more and more into their English Old Testaments, they are taking down and dusting their Hebrew Bibles with a sigh that they did not have more favorable opportunities for the study of Hebrew in their earlier days; laymen are looking at their English Old Testaments with added respect, and occasionally determining to master the original, and even the Sunday-school scholar is beginning to feel that in the air is something new respecting the Old Testament. It would, of course, be unwarranted to attribute all these results to the Hebrew Summer Schools. The less conspicuous Correspondence School has had some share in the work. And besides, and above all this, in the ordering of God the Old Testament has come to the front in the theological world. The Hebrew Summer Schools, however, have had much to do in bringing the Old Testament to the front in this country; or to put the fact in another way, they have been a powerful instrument under God in the accomplishment of this work.